

Housekeeper questions dismissal Southern Site files bankruptcy

BY BRIAN HUDSON
ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

May 27 — Members of UE Local 150, the union representing employees at UNC-Chapel Hill, have announced a campaign to reinstate Bill Shuler, who was allegedly fired in retaliation for bringing attention to worksite hazards.

Shuler, a former UNC housekeeper, was terminated May 19, one day before officials from the Occupational Safety and Health Administrations inspected the University in response to a complaint filed by Shuler.

Shuler's complaint to OSHA was in response to a newly imple-

mented cleaning agent which had allegedly caused health problems for several housekeepers.

"I personally know employees went to (the Ambulatory Care Center) coughing up blood, with nose bleeds."

Shuler said he first brought attention to the issue in a December meeting with Peter Reinhardt, director of the UNC-CH Department of Environment, Health and Safety.

"We just told him it was a problem, and people were getting sick," Shuler said.

He said that Reinhardt attributed this to improper use of the product. "The meetings were to no avail, he did not believe it was as serious as it was."

Reinhardt said he was not involved in Shuler's termination nor was he aware of the grounds for which he was fired.

He added that an OSHA investigation is not an extraordinary occurrence.

"OSHA did not reveal to me why they initiated this visit," he said,

explaining that this is the third visit OSHA made to UNC this year.

Shuler said he appealed to Laurie Charest, UNC-CH's associate vice chancellor for human resources, and Leslie Winner, general counsel to UNC-system president Molly Broad, before submitting a complaint to OSHA on May 10.

According to letters from his supervisor Leo Rapley, Shuler was notified of disciplinary action May 18 and notified of his termination the next day. OSHA officials made their compliance review May 20.

Attempts by The Daily Tar Heel to reach Rapley were unsuccessful.

With help from UE Local 150 and several UNC-CH groups, Shuler is pursuing legal action after being fired for what he said is a retaliation for speaking out.

He said he is seeking reinstatement as well as disciplinary action against supervisors who target whistleblowers.

In addition, he wants the removal of the chemicals and employee health screenings.

Shuler is also petitioning the University to revise the process in which employees file grievances. He said he was not allowed to offer a rebuttal on the incidents for which he was fired.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

Southern Site files bankruptcy

BY BRIAN HUDSON
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June 24 — Southern Site Environmental, a subcontractor hired for the demolition of UNC's Medical Sciences Research Building, filed for bankruptcy protection after not receiving full payment for their services, company officials claim.

Tim Gabriel, the company's project manager for the endeavor, said that later this week the company will be filing at least a \$1 million lawsuit related to both the payment disputes and allegations that the work site was hazardous to the workers.

"The lawsuit is based on failure of the University to provide a clean building based on the contract," Gabriel said. "delays in the performance of our job because of the state of the building, and the hazardous materials in place."

He said, according to its contract SSE workers were not to be exposed to hazardous materials.

Gabriel also said the University failed to account for the company's conditional costs incurred because of delays, which amount to several hundred thousand dollars.

He said company officials want to sue both the University and T.A. Loving, the University's contractor because, Gabriel said, "in our opinion there was a conspiracy and a

violation of federal law and a violation of state law."

Peter Reinhardt, UNC's director of environment, health and safety said he is confident that UNC took all appropriate steps to provide a safe environment.

"All that work was done prior to the interior demolition by SSE," he said. "Furthermore, they were specifically told not to go near those containers."

"They should not have been exposed to any hazardous waste."

SSE came under scrutiny early this year after removing two containers of waste from the construction site.

In the fall University officials enlisted another subcontractor, Quantum Environmental, to remove the building's "P traps," the pipes from under the sinks in laboratories.

Quantum Environmental was instructed to place the hazardous materials in containers that later would be removed from the site. By January, the containers had not been removed, and when SSE completed its work, workers removed the containers and sent a sample to be tested in a New Jersey laboratory.

The removal of the chemicals spurred intervention from the N.C. Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, as Southern Site & Environmental was not authorized to transport the material.

Gabriel said in an interview with The Daily Tar Heel in April that officials had made numerous requests to the University for the removal of the materials.

Reinhardt explained in April that officials had been unable to reach the site in order to remove the materials.

"The person who was responsible for picking them up was unable to get there," he said at the time. "The construction site was extremely busy and congested."

Reinhardt said Tuesday that the University has worked to ensure that a similar situation won't occur again.

"We have taken several steps already to make sure in the future all our hazardous wastes are collected promptly."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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Freshman kills self on campus

Student related to former chancellor

BY BRIAN HUDSON
ASSISTANT UNIVERSITY EDITOR

May 13 — UNC freshman Simon Carlyle Sitterson IV died late last month, the result of an apparent suicide.

His body was found by a University employee at about 7 a.m. April 23 in a gravel parking lot outside Forest Theatre, according to police reports.

Randy Young, spokesman for UNC's Department of Public Safety, said officials are treating the matter as a suicide, and they do not suspect foul play.

The cause of his death was a gunshot wound to the head, according to the state medical examiner's office. Young said that because Sitterson, 18, was not reported as a missing person, campus police are not aware of the conditions that led to his death.

Sitterson, known as Si, was a freshman and a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity.

He was born in Charlotte and he graduated from Woodberry Forest School in Woodberry Forest, Va. in 2003, where he was a member of the football and lacrosse teams.

Attempts to contact Sitterson's family were unsuccessful.

Sitterson was a relative of the late Joseph Carlyle Sitterson, a former professor and UNC's chancellor from 1966 until 1972.

Simon Sitterson's memorial service was held April 26 at Duke University Chapel. Members of his fraternity and high school acted as honorary pallbearers. A graveside service was held April 27 in Kinston.

Simon Sitterson is survived by his brother Stuart Page Sitterson; his parents, Page Nichols Sitterson and Simon Carlyle Sitterson, III; as well as his his maternal grandmother, Norma Barringer; and his paternal grandfather, Simon Carlyle Sitterson, Jr.

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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